BearPaw Legal Education & Resource Centre
NEWSWIRE

Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
May 13-17, 2013

Maybe Homeless Drunks Don't Have it Better in Canada, After All

Slate
May 13, 2013
Justin Peters



Alvin Cote

Saskatoon Police Service Blog

On Friday, I wrote about Alvin Cote, a homeless Canadian drunk of First Nations descent who befriended much of the Saskatoon police department over the course of his more than 800 arrests for public drunkenness. Cote's recent death hit the Saskatoon cops hard, prompting tears, memorials, and at least one heartfelt blog post in which a constable mourned his alcoholic friend. This wouldn't have happened in an American city, I suggested. Whereas Canadians apparently love and revere their homeless drunks, Americans prefer to scorn them and escort them out of town.

Well, I've got egg on my face. As it turns out, escorting homeless people out of town is as popular in Saskatoon as it is in the States. An emailer alerts me to the practice of "starlight tours," or "starlight cruises," in which drunk or disorderly

Aboriginal Canadians—people like Alvin Cote—were allegedly rounded up by Saskatoon police, escorted to the outskirts of town, and left to freeze to death. As a 2001 Amnesty International report put it, "There were reports that members of Saskatoon City Police had for a number of years had an unofficial policy of abandoning intoxicated or 'troublesome' members of the indigenous community away from the population centre of Saskatoon, thereby placing them at great risk of dying of hypothermia during the winter months."

In 2000, for instance, a First Nations man named Darrel Night was allegedly handcuffed after leaving a party, driven out of town, and left on the roadside in sub-zero temperatures. "He called out for them to stop, afraid for his life. 'That's your fucking problem,' was the only reply from the patrol car as it drove away," reports Christopher Thrall in Vue Weekly. Night lived, but others weren't as lucky.

While the two officers in the Night case were arrested and imprisoned, the Saskatoon police claimed that it was an isolated incident, and that "starlight cruising" was not departmental policy. Many locals disagreed, citing several suspicious freezing deaths in which the police may have had a hand. In 1990, a First Nations teenager named Neil Stonechild was found frozen to death in a Saskatoon field; Stonechild's friend reports seeing a handcuffed, bleeding Stonechild in the back of a police car the night he disappeared, saying, "Help me. They're going to kill me." In the early 2000s, the Canadian government investigated the freezing deaths of four Aboriginal men in the outskirts of Saskatoon. While two of the deaths were deemed accidental, coroners' inquests were "unable to determine the circumstances" that led to the hypothermia deaths of Rodney Naistus and Lawrence Wegner in the same area where Darrel Night was abandoned by police. At the inquest, two women testified that they saw Wegner in police custody the night he disappeared.

In 2003, new Saskatoon police chief Russell Sabo confirmed many locals' suspicions when he admitted that, in 1976, an officer was disciplined for starlight-touring an Aboriginal woman. In a television interview, Sabo further admitted that starlight tours had "happened more than once, and we fully admit that and, in fact, on behalf of the police department, I want to apologize. It's quite conceivable there were other times. I think it's important we take ownership when we do something wrong and correct the behavior."

As far as I can tell, there haven't been any new starlight cruises reported since the Night case made headlines. Does this sordid history detract from the specific story of Alvin Cote, beloved First Nation inebriate? Not necessarily. The Cote story remains a lovely testament to the virtues of human kindness. But it just goes to show that kindness to one drunk doesn't necessarily mean kindness to all drunks. And it should remind us not to allow the stories of police work at its best to make us forget the stories of the police at their worst.

First Nations woman killed by train in Toronto was a witness in murder trial

APTN
May 15, 2013
Kenneth Jackson



A 25-year-old First Nation woman who was struck and killed by a freight train in Toronto Tuesday night was also a witness in a murder investigation and had allegedly been receiving death threats about testifying according to people close to her.

Terra Gardner is believed to have been hit on the tracks near Young Street and Summerhill Avenue at about 10:25 p.m. close to a popular spot where people are known to drink by the tracks. Two other people are believed to have been with her at the time of her death.

Gardner had been receiving death threats and was being called a rat for providing information in the Toronto homicide of First Nations man Leo Buswa in 2010.

Buswa was beaten Aug. 29 that year and died a month later in hospital.

Last month Gardner testified at the preliminary trial of Blake Paul, of Moose Factory, Ont., who is accused of second-degree murder. Paul was arrested in 2012 in Cape Breton, N.S.

Gardner apparently was reluctant to testify and she was warned by officials that if she didn't testify she would be held in custody until the trial, scheduled for later this year, according to Doug Johnson Hatlem, a street pastor with Sanctuary, an organization in Toronto that helps struggling people.

"They did not give her adequate protection for testifying…in a major murder trial where she is being called a rat and being threatened and we had to literally beg to get her a second night in a hotel and she was testifying for five straight days," said

Johnson Hatlem. "They just wanted to give her the first night. She's homeless. She's vulnerable."

It's not immediately known if Gardner's death is being treated as suspicious by Toronto police but it's leaving some to question the timing of the death.

"That's a potential," said Johnson Hatlem. "It also could have been an accident. We don't know that yet but given the circumstances if this isn't treated at least a little bit suspicious it's going to be really, really maddening."

Originally from Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation, located 40 km east of Fort Frances, Ont., Gardner was living in Toronto. She often went to Sanctuary for help.

On her Facebook page dozens of people expressed sorrow upon learning of her death.

"I just don't want to believe it's true and then I keep seeing everyone post about you being gone," said one person. "The waves of sorrow are small right now but, I can feel them growing and it hurts more and more when I think I wont be able to walk do the street and see that beautiful smile of yours or get one of those super awesome hugs."

Police said they couldn't release any information.

First Nations seek to reclaim Mount Douglas, restore its original name

Times Colonist
May 16, 2013
Judith Lavoie



First Nations will begin a trek to the summit of Mount Douglas next week to reclaim the area by symbolically restoring its historical name. Photograph by: Arnold Lim, Times Colonist

The peak of Mount Douglas represents the beginning of time for Coast Salish people, and next week, First Nations will march to the summit and reclaim the area by symbolically restoring its historical name.

"It's really important for us because it's the start of our people. It's part of our creation story and it's where our treaty was first agreed to," said Tsawout elder Eric Pelkey, who is calling for a day of action to reclaim what's known as PKOLS (pronounced p'cawls), translated as white rock.

"This is something that our elders have been calling for for many, many years. To bring back the names we have always used to where they belong," he said.

Saanich Tribes elders say white rocks were taken from nearby Cordova Bay to mark important places and territorial boundaries, Pelkey said.

In 1852, Sir James Douglas met local First Nations on the Mount Douglas peak to discuss and sign a treaty — something that has been a bone of contention ever since.

"[The First Nations] intended to kill him and then wipe out the colony of Fort Victoria," Pelkey said.

"But they decided to sign the treaty because a priest came forward who spoke Sencoten and he made the case that these were spiritual people who believed in God and they should trust them to live peacefully among their people."

It was understood that the Saanich people would not be interfered with, but that promise has since been broken, Pelkey said.

On May 22, at 5 p.m., there will be a march to the summit from the Mount Douglas lower parking lot, and then a re-enactment of the signing of the Douglas Treaty, Pelkey said.

John Elliott will tell the creation story and a new PKOLS sign will be installed on the peak.

"The main purpose is to really bring this out to the public. We would like to make people more aware of the history of the Saanich people," Pelkey said.

The provincial government and municipality of Saanich have been contacted about changing the name, he said, adding once the symbolic reclamation is over, the aim is to have the name officially amended.

However, Saanich Mayor Frank Leonard said he only heard about the march up the mountain and planned name change on Facebook.

"We have given a heads-up to the police and parks departments and we are just focused on making sure they have a safe event," he said.

Leonard is not sure what process would be needed to change the name of the peak, which he described as an asset the community has through a provincial Crown grant.

"I would think people would want to have a community discussion."

University of Victoria professor Taiaiake Alfred, a member of the Indigenous Nationhood Movement, called restoring original names a fundamental sign of respect.

"It represents respect from the people who came afterwards for the ancient history of this place."

The intention is to reverse as many names as possible, Alfred said.

"That's not to say they want to reverse everything about the white history of this place, but it should be about co-existence."

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Northern Gateway pipeline crew booted out of Gitga'at Nation territory

The Province
May 16, 2013



Hartley Bay on B.C.'s north coast. Members of the Gitga'at Nation say they've evicted a Northern Gateway Pipelines survey crew from their territory after they showed up uninvited. Photograph by: Debra Brash, PROVINCE

HARTLEY BAY — Members of the Gitga'at Nation say they have evicted a Northern Gateway Pipelines crew from their territory on the north coast of B.C.

The small First Nation of Hartley Bay says the crew showed up uninvited to carry out work on oil spill response surveys.

Coun. Marven Robinson says Calgary-based Enbridge, the proponent of the 1,600-kilometre pipeline and oil tanker port, has "screwed up" relations with First Nations and continues to do so.

Consultation with native bands has been a major stumbling block for the $6-billion project that would connect the Alberta oil sands to Asian markets.

Many in the industry are hopeful that a surprise Liberal victory in B.C.'s provincial election this week renews hope that the much-maligned project may yet go ahead.

The federal review panel weighing the project will begin hearing final arguments next month in Terrace, and must issue its report to the federal government by the end of the year.

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First Nation chief invites judge who jailed him for dinner: Donny Morris wants judge, former A-G to visit Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug

CBC News
May 13, 2013 10:31 AM ET

The chief of a remote Ontario First Nation wants a judge and a former attorney general to come stay at his house, in an effort to show there are no hard feelings after the pair were involved in decisions that sent community leaders to jail.

Kitchenumaykoosib Inninuwug Chief Donny Morris and five other leaders were jailed in 2008 after protesting against mining activity on their traditional lands.

Now, the chief said, he'd like Justice Patrick Smith and former Attorney General Michael Bryant to come for dinner.

"I'll even make the opportunity for them to come stay at my home with me," Morris said. "I'll cook them up a good meal of traditional foods."

The chief's invitation comes as part of a broader initiative launched by youth in Kitchenuhmaykoosib. They're inviting celebrities and ordinary Canadians to experience a week in the life of the remote community in the lead up to National Aboriginal Day June 21.

Morris issued his invitation to Smith and Bryant on YouTube.

"Just to show there are no hard feelings," Morris said. "Life goes on for both parties, and if there's anything we need to say to each other, I'd like to just clear it up."

New book explores why Aboriginal communities seek Charter reform

CBC News
May 14, 2013
David Milward



Detail from "Aboriginal Justice and the Charter: Realizing a Culturally Sensitive Interpretation of Legal Rights" by David Milward (UBC Press)

As an assistant professor of law at the University of Manitoba and also a member of the Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation, Dr. David Milward spends a lot of time thinking about Aboriginal rights.

He's about to launch Aboriginal Justice and the Charter: Realizing a Culturally Sensitive Interpretation of Legal Rights. The book looks at the tension between Aboriginal approaches to justice and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

SCENE asked Milward to describe the five most important aspects of this ongoing

issue:

1. There is the legitimate concern that Aboriginal political leaders could set up miniature tyrannies in their own communities. Is the Charter a legitimate avenue to prevent that? There are indeed significant factions in Aboriginal communities who feel that some form of individual rights is necessary as a check against abuse of governing powers in Aboriginal communities.

The Human Rights Commission noted that many Aboriginal persons that they consulted felt that there was room for compromise, that human rights could be available as address against Aboriginal governments, but interpreted in ways that were sensitive to Aboriginal traditions.

The book purports to engage in a similar exercise with respect to Charter rights enforceable against Aboriginal criminal justice systems.

2. A culturally sensitive interpretation of Charter rights can expand the room for independent Aboriginal justice systems, which can be a more constructive approach to dealing with the problem of Aboriginal over-incarceration.

Aboriginal justice, which shares parallels with restorative justice, is often presented as a more constructive alternative to dealing with Aboriginal crime than mass incarceration, which does not deter, does not reform inmates, and actually makes matters worse as they expose Aboriginal persons to criminal lifestyles and gangland cultures.

There is the concern that the Charter may erect barriers to an expansion of Aboriginal justice by obliging Aboriginal communities to model their justice systems too closely to conventional common law systems.

"Aboriginal Justice and the Charter: Realizing a Culturally Sensitive Interpretation of Legal Rights" by David Milward (UBC Press)3. Does the Charter represent such a fundamentally different world view and culture that it's incompatible with Aboriginal justice?

The issue of applying the Charter to Aboriginal governance is a very divisive issue in Aboriginal communities. Some Aboriginal persons, like for example Taiaiake Alfred, would suggest that the individual rights model of the Charter is so fundamentally inconsistent with Aboriginal values and world views that have a collective emphasis that there is no room for the Charter having any application to Aboriginal societies.

Other factions, like the Native Womens' Association of Canada, insist that the Charter must have some application to Aboriginal governance to avoid abuses of power.

4. Can the application of the Charter frustrate the pursuit of collective goals by Aboriginal societies? Aboriginal communities may want to use past methods of justice to address threats to their collective well-being, like intergenerational sexual abuse, substance abuse, and bootlegging.

Charter rights may frustrate the realization of these collective goals. For example, an Aboriginal accused can hide behind the right to silence, whereas an Aboriginal truth-speaking tradition may warrant the accused explaining his side of the story, or accepting responsibility for what happened.

Another example, excluding evidence under the Charter can mean a lost opportunity to pursue the healing and reintegration of an Aboriginal offender.

5. Should the application of the Charter to Aboriginal justice be a matter of consultation with Aboriginal communities instead of a matter of unilateral imposition by the federal government?

The federal government, when concluding self-government agreements with Aboriginal communities, always insists on a clause that the Charter applies in full force to the Aboriginal government.

Many Aboriginal persons view this as a paternalistic imposition, leaving no room for alternatives, such as interpreting the Charter in a manner that is sensitive to the culture and needs of Aboriginal communities.

David Milward launches Aboriginal Justice and the Charter: Realizing a Culturally Sensitive Interpretation of Legal Rights Tuesday May 14 at 7 p.m. at McNally Robinson Grant Park.

First Nations to sign agreement to protect the vulnerable in their communities: Commitment is a first-of-its-kind arrangement

Pique News Magazine
May 16, 2013
Cathryn Atkinson

Six First Nations communities in the Sea to Sky region have been invited to sign a commitment agreement to ensure the safety of elders, women and children.

The "Building Bridges: Safety and Security Agreement" has been development by the Howe Sound Women's Centre (HSWC) at the end of a four-year study into violence and healthy relationships funded by Vancouver Coastal Health and administrated by the Southern Stl'Atl'imx Health Society.

Now that the program's funding has ended the Squamish, Lil'wat, N'Quatqua, Samahquam, Douglas and Skatin Nations have been invited to keep the momentum going by formally signing the agreement at a ceremony at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre on May 21, said Sheila Allen, HSWC executive director.

The program ran from April 2009 to spring 2013.

"We received funding to hire a coordinator who got a group of volunteers, one from each of the six nations," Allen recalled.

Over the years, the projects included developing advisory committees to discuss abuse of elders, women and children, workshops on elder care, girl power training, Sisters in Spirit vigils to remember missing and murdered First Nations women, support groups and volunteer training.

"We also ran some Healthy Relationship workshops as well, and a lot of people expressed that they felt really good about the opportunity to be able to talk," Allen said. "They wanted to have this public acknowledgement, opening up and talking amongst all of the nations about the issues so they could start the healing process.

"Being able to facilitate that, that's why the women's centre is here, to help women and children in need. Bringing hope, so we can start resolving this, is really rewarding."

Resource guides on the prevention of elder abuse and on women's safety were developed out of the programming, and this information will form the basis of any future work.

The agreement signing, Allen said, would take the commitment in the communities further and encourage collaboration between them.

"We wanted to be able to talk to all of the chiefs and councils, and bring their focus and attention to what was happening in their particular communities and how important this issue was, and gain a mutual commitment to seeing an end to it," Allen said.

"We thought bringing everyone together would help in terms of creating synergies."

Three chiefs so far are confirmed as attending. Three chief and councils had received a presentation on the project; Allen said, "They were very receptive."

She added that as far as she knew no similar agreement exists elsewhere.

"We were thinking of leaving a legacy and how we can continue the momentum," Allen said. "We no longer have the funding to continue offering that ongoing service in each nation, but certainly we built these resource guides, we felt that the knowledge-based information, we got the momentum going... Now is the time to make positive change and so far it has been very well received."

With the program coming to an end, this is one way to extend it.

"Hopefully, people will come up with ideas as to where funding for future needs will come from, so they can identify what some of the needs in their community are,

what are possible funding sources and what are ways to address some of these needs," Allen said.

Canada: Unauthorized Individuals Cannot Claim Aboriginal Consultation Rights

Mondaq
13 May 2013
Roy Millen

On May 9, 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) released its latest decision concerning the duty of the Crown to consult with Aboriginal Peoples in connection with resource development in Behn v. Moulton Contracting Ltd. The SCC confirmed that aboriginal and treaty rights are communal rights which may only be raised by representatives of the community that holds the rights, not individuals acting without community authority. Further, aboriginal individuals are not entitled to assert aboriginal or treaty rights to justify a blockade or other interference with private parties' exercise of government-issued licences or other rights to develop natural resources. First Nations and other Aboriginal Peoples who wish to challenge regulatory permits must do so in court. This is consistent with the duty of mutual good faith inherent in Crown–aboriginal relations.

Legal Backdrop and Implications

Since the SCC's 2004 decision in the case of Haida Nation v. B.C., Canadian courts have consistently upheld and developed the duty of the federal and provincial Crown to consult with Aboriginal Peoples before making any decisions that may impact claimed or existing aboriginal or treaty rights. The Behn decision answers two questions regarding the duty to consult, which have been at issue in a number of other cases: who speaks for the nation; and how and when aboriginal and treaty rights can be raised.

The first question arises from the communal nature, but individual exercise, of aboriginal and treaty rights. These rights are uniquely protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and belong to "aboriginal peoples". However, in most cases individuals exercise the rights, for example, by going hunting, fishing, trapping or gathering. In those circumstances, there has been some question as to who should raise the rights. While it is no longer the case that only the chief of a First Nation can do so, the Behn decision makes clear that individuals who act without authority from the nation cannot raise aboriginal or treaty rights as a means to challenge regulatory rights granted to commercial parties. This will be a relief to proponents and the Crown who have been faced with requests for consultation from unauthorized individuals and groups within a nation.

The second question, concerning how and when aboriginal rights can be raised, arises because even after a Crown decision to permit resource development, individuals within an aboriginal community may express concerns. The Behn decision affirms that in such circumstances the individuals are not entitled to take "self-help" remedies to physically block the developer's exercise of its regulatory rights. Rather, if the nation wishes to contest the validity of the regulatory decision, it can follow the proper legal steps to do so, typically through judicial review. Unless and until a developer's regulatory permit is set aside by a court, the permit is valid and the developer is entitled to exercise the rights granted by the permit.

Facts and Analysis in the Behn case

The respondent Moulton Contracting Ltd. is a forestry company that obtained permits and licences from the B.C. Ministry of Forests to harvest timber in the territory of the Fort Nelson First Nation, within the Treaty 8 area of northeastern B.C. The First Nation did not contest the validity of the permits, either by commencing judicial review of the permits, or in the subsequent legal proceedings. The Behns, members of the nation who claim aboriginal and treaty rights within the area proposed for logging, erected a camp that effectively blocked the company's access to its logging sites. The company brought a legal action against the Behns. The Behns asserted their aboriginal and treaty rights in defence, arguing that Moulton's permits were invalid because the Ministry of Forests had failed to adequately consult them before issuing the permits. The company sought to strike the defence as improper, given that (a) the First Nation expressly did not authorize the individuals to assert the community's rights in this manner; and (b) no one had challenged the licences when they were issued, so the defence amounted to an improper collateral attack and an abuse of process.

The SCC confirmed that aboriginal and treaty rights are communal rights. The duty to consult is owed by the Crown to the community which holds the rights. Anyone asserting the rights, and claiming a right to be consulted, must have the community's authority to do so. In this case, the First Nation had not authorized the Behns to assert a breach of the community's rights. As such, they had no "standing" or right to do so.

While this decision is relatively clear, in other cases, the question of "who speaks for the nation" may not be so easily resolved. For example, some First Nations form tribal councils which may assert the right to be consulted. Some First Nations have parallel governance structures involving both elected and hereditary systems. Other First Nations devolve the right to be consulted to smaller family groups in connection with particular areas within the First Nation's broader claimed territory. In all such circumstances, third parties and the Crown will need to continue to be careful to ensure that they are dealing with the appropriate representatives of the Aboriginal Peoples that hold the rights.

The SCC also confirmed that it is inappropriate for aboriginal individuals or nations to physically prevent third parties from exercising rights granted by the Crown to develop natural resources. In this case, neither the Behns nor the First Nation had challenged Moulton's licences when they were issued. No one had sought judicial relief such as an injunction. The permits were therefore valid, and Moulton was entitled to rely on them. By blockading Moulton's access to its logging sites and then justifying their actions by contesting the validity of the permits, the Behns engaged in an impermissible collateral attack and an abuse of process. The proper time and method to challenge the licences was shortly after they were issued, through legal proceedings. By waiting until Moulton acted on its rights, the SCC held that the Behns did not fulfil Aboriginal Peoples' responsibility to act in good faith in their dealings with the Crown and third parties concerning aboriginal and treaty rights.

Conclusion

The Behn decision is another development in the evolving law concerning Aboriginal Peoples' rights to be consulted by the Crown concerning proposed resource development in aboriginal territory. The decision adds certainty in two areas. First, the government's duty – often delegated by the Crown to third parties – to consult Aboriginal Peoples does not require consultation of individuals and groups within those communities who have no communal authorization. While it is often prudent for proponents to broadly engage aboriginal communities that may be affected by a project, only those people who can demonstrate that they speak for the nation are required to be consulted. Second, once the government issues a licence or permit, the permit holder is entitled to act on it. The only proper means to contest the permit is via legal proceedings. The SCC has expressed that after the fact non-legal actions to prevent the permittee from exercising its rights are contrary to Aboriginal Peoples' obligation to act promptly and in good faith when asserting their constitutional rights.

Jonathan Kay: Urban-bound aboriginals pose Canada's biggest integration challenge, not immigrants

National Post
May 13, 2013



Jonathan Kay
Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian PressAn aboriginal protester shows her support for Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence during a protest near Parliament Hill in January 2013.

Two weeks ago, the front page of The New York Times sports section carried a big picture of Bhola Chauhan and

Harnarayan Singh, two turbaned Sikhs who anchor a weekly Hockey Night in Canada show in Punjabi.

It's a fantastic shot. Singh (who is known to spontaneously break into Punjabi hockey-themed poetry of his own creation) appears to be deep in the throes of an animated play-by-play call. Chauhan, on the other hand, is wearing a grimace, gesturing exasperatedly at the action, as if to say, "You call that high-sticking?"

You can see why a Times editor went big with this story: Chauhan and Singh perfectly symbolize Canada as most New Yorkers would conceive it: a diverse, tolerant, hockey-mad land of immigrants.

And for the most part, that stereotype is perfectly accurate.

According to newly released Canadian census data, Canada now is home to approximately 6.8 million foreign-born residents. That figure represents 20.6% of our population — the highest level in any G8 country. (The corresponding U.S. figure is about 13%.) Most newcomers are from Asia; with the Philippines, China and India topping the list. Nine out of 10 immigrants are settling in urban areas of Canada.

There once was a time — not so long ago — when every news story about rising immigrant levels was greeted with much fretting about our increasingly "balkanized," hyphenated, multiculturalized society. The 9/11 attacks caused an uptick in such sentiment. And even today, there no doubt will be some who anxiously seize on census data showing that Islam has become Canada's fastest growing religion (though, at a mere 3.2% of the Canadian population, Muslims still are outnumbered more than 20:1 by Christians).

But overall, this sort of anxiety is on the downswing. It has been almost half a century since the Immigration Act was amended to permit the admission of large numbers of non-white newcomers from the developing world. Their children and grandchildren have become fluent English and French speakers. Immigrants from all groups have become active participants in mainstream politics. And the post-9/11 notion that whole legions of "radicalized" Muslim immigrants would create a terrorist fifth column within our society has been proven false.

In cultural terms, Mumbai and Hong Kong arguably are closer to Toronto than Attawapiskat or Yellow Quill

In fact, when it comes to integration, the biggest challenge Canada now faces arguably has nothing to do with immigration.

Many of the immigrants coming to Canada, however long their voyage, are city-dwellers who already are familiar with retail capitalism, digital technology, the daily

crush of strangers, and the frenzied pace of urban life. In cultural terms, Mumbai and Hong Kong arguably are closer to Toronto than Attawapiskat or Yellow Quill.

Which brings me to one of the most striking findings from Wednesday's census data: the phenomenal growth rate among self-identified aboriginals. In 2001, 976,000 Canadians fell into this category. By 2011, the figure was 1.4-million. About 50% of First Nations with registered status live on reserves, and many of them will be moving to urban areas in coming years, in search of jobs. Is Canada ready to help them integrate into urban culture?

Last week, I spent some time at the Native Women's Resource Centre, one of several groups that help aboriginals build safe, stable lives for themselves in Toronto. It's difficult work: Many women arrive on their doorstep with little in the way of education or employment skills. For aboriginals who come from reserves containing just a few hundred people, the mere act of taking the subway or reading a Toronto street map can seem intimidating.

The government should be doing all it can to integrate reserve-resident aboriginals into the Canadian economy. Current policy, which promotes the preservation of native culture on remote landscapes instead of social and economic development, has had its day. But it is unfair to promote new such policies in the absence of viable support services for those aboriginals who do migrate to urban job centres.

"For the women who leave the reserve, it's often because they want to improve the quality of life for their children," one worker told me. "For the men, it's more often for mobility and economic opportunities. But they all suffer a sense of disconnection from their communities, which can be crippling."

On reserves, band councils assign houses to residents. In the big city, just finding an apartment can be a major ordeal — especially for someone who has never before set eyes on a lease, or any other form of legal document. Discrimination is also an issue. When aboriginal applicants show up to rent an apartment, a landlord's first question often is: 'Do you like to party?'"

"Many aboriginal people who come to the big city, they just get off at the bus station, straight from the north, and they have no idea what to do or where to get help," says Steven Vanloffeld, executive director of the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council. "So they end up sleeping on the couches of friends, or friends of friends — and they're exposed to who knows what kind of influences." For these people, life on the street — and all the deadly, soul-crushing addictions and trades that go with it — is just one argument away.

This is a black hole for Canadian policy-making: Sixty percent of aboriginals live in urban areas, Mr. Vanloffeld notes — yet less than 1% of Ottawa's Aboriginal Affairs budgets goes to non-reserve populations. There is a network of small groups, NGOs

and government offices that do help urban natives. But unlike East Asians and South Asians, aboriginals who live in a big city do not have any large, prosperous clusters they can look to for start-up opportunities: Aboriginal enclaves in cities tend to be poor and geographically disparate.

"Reserves have their problems, but they also have strengths," says Ken Richard, head of native family and child services in Toronto. "You have an extended family system, collectivity built right into the culture. The city dilutes all that. And the problems take hold — like addictions and unhealed trauma. Living in a trailer near a lake on a reserve, yes that's poverty — but it isn't the same thing as a cockroach-infested apartment in a city."

Like the other aboriginal social workers I've spoken to here in Toronto, Mr. Richard would like to see this country dedicate more care and resources to the migrations that are taking place from north to south — not just the overseas immigrants arriving from east and west. When it comes to the challenge of acclimatizing newcomers to Canadian cities, the longest journeys often are those that don't require a passport.

Statue set to rise in Stanley Park: Sculptor carves tribute to his great-great-grandfather

Vancouver Sun
May 14, 2013
Kim Pemberton

When acclaimed native artist Luke Marston works on his latest and largest project to date, he likes to think about his ancestors and the colourful lives they led at the turn of the century in British Columbia.

Marston is the great-great-grandson of Portuguese Joe Silvey, a whaler, a Gastown saloon keeper and the first person in B.C. to get a seine fishing license, and his second wife Kwahama Kwatleematt. Silvey's first wife, Khaltinaht, came from a prominent Musqueam family. She died of tuberculosis in her 30s after giving birth to two daughters. He would later have nine children with his second wife, a weaver.

"It is such a great story. When the first settlers came here it was a negative thing (for the First Nations people) but not with him. He married the chief's granddaughter (Chief Kiapilano) and was accepted by the people."

Marston is commemorating the lives of Silvey and his wives, and the connection between the Portuguese and Coast Salish people, in a 14-foot bronze sculpture that has been proposed for a site in Stanley Park, where Silvey lived with his first family.

The location is at Brockton Point, near the Harry Jerome statue. Silvey later moved to Reid Island, in the southern Gulf Islands, with his second wife, which is where he is buried.

Marston's sculpture, which has been more than two years in the making, is set to receive final approval from the Vancouver park board, with a tentative unveiling scheduled for Sept. 28.

The city's public arts committee gave unanimous approval for the project and the design last December.

Half of the sculpture, which he is carving from yellow cedar, is completed and now being cast in bronze at a foundry in Red Deer, Alta. What remains to be finished are the life-size representations of Silvey and his two Coast Salish wives, which Marston is carving at his workshop near Ladysmith with help from his brother John.

A non-profit society called the Portuguese Joe Memorial Society paid for the work after getting funding from the Portuguese community and provincial and federal legacy grant programs. The Portuguese consulate general is a member of the committee, along with historian and author Jean Barman, who wrote a book called The Great Adventures of Portuguese Joe Silvey.

"He was a very interesting man," said Marston. "Portuguese Joe means a lot to the Portuguese community and to the native community. It's been a real cultural exchange doing this project. We had a Coast Salish speaker talk to the Portuguese community and did our songs and dances."

He said to help raise funds for the project he has also made limited-edition silkscreen prints of the stone design that will be at base of the sculpture. Those black and white stones are coming from Portugal and being put in place by a Portuguese mason.

Silvey left Pico Island in Portugal's

Azores archipelago to go whaling at the age of 12. He ended up on B.C.'s coast and as a young man opened a saloon in Vancouver across the street from John Deighton, generally known as Gassy Jack, after whom the Gastown neighbourhood is named.

Marston said the symbols on the statue have a meaning, such as the grey whale that represents the whaling occupation that brought Silvey initially to B.C., and a

circle that represents his saloon called Hole in the Wall. Under the circle there is also a grapevine that represents the grapes Silvey either brought with him or later bought from Portugal, and that he replanted on Reid Island - which remain today.

His children are represented by five female salmon and six male salmon, and there is also a design of a blanket that belonged to Chief Kiapilano. There's also a star to represent a boat he built, named Morning Star, and mud sharks, which he would catch to extract oil to sell to miners to use as fuel in their lanterns.

Marston was a recipient last year of the Queen's Jubilee Medal. Among his most recent projects are the Medicine Box, a carved bentwood box that represents the survivors of the residential school system, and the 14-foot-high Healing Pole, commissioned by former B.C. lieutenant-governor Stephen Point to stand outside Government House in Victoria.

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Dan Snyder, The Redskins and a Short History of Racist Team Names

Huffington Post
May 14, 2013
Shawn Setaro

We at News Genius have lately been expanding our coverage to include contextualizing and analyzing stories in the sports world. One of our first and most vital entries was also one of the shortest.

Washington Redskins owner Dan Snyder insisted recently to *USA Today* that he "will never change the name of the team." While we admire his brevity, clarity, and capitalization skills, we can't help but wonder about something.

Snyder claimed that Redskins fans "understand the great tradition and what it's all about and what it means." While he no doubt meant his team's 80-year history, there is another "great tradition" that also fits - the long history of racist sports team names and mascots.

Native American history -- and stereotyping -- has long been source material for team monikers. From the Chiefs to the Braves to the Hawks to the Seminoles, outfits at all levels have relied on First Nations for the words on their jerseys and inspiration for their cartoonish mascots.

These names were taken with little consideration for the actual people whose history and culture they were scouring. That finally began to change in the late 1960's, when Native groups began advocating for institutions to drop offensive team names.

Slowly, there was progress. Team jerseys and mascots began changing one by one, as schools were held accountable for the damage they were causing. Even the NCAA finally came around in 2005, banning "hostile or abusive" Native mascots. That same year, the American Psychological Association acknowledged that American Indian mascots and symbols create a hostile environment, and effectively amount to discrimination.

None of this, however, matters to Snyder. Nor, apparently, does the fact that according to pretty much every source, from the dictionary to Native writers, the term "redskins" is a horrifying one, referring to the scalps of Natives that were sold for bounties in the 17th and 18th centuries. Massachusetts in particular was a major offender, offering huge money for native scalps, but scalping bounties existed in every state in New England during that period, as well as in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and more. Scalps of men ("men" meaning "any male over twelve") paid the most, but women and children were not far behind.

Whether Dan Snyder likes it or not, his team's name is a living reminder of this barbaric, genocidal practice. His stubbornness in the face of lawsuits and legislation seems like a 21st century version of George Wallace's similarly retrograde call for "segregation forever," and hopefully his outburst will look just as archaic in the not-too-distant future.

First Nations Chief demands the province withdraw aboriginal consultation bill

Calgary Herald
May 14, 2013
Darcy Henton



Aboriginal relations Minister Robin Campbell says he consulted widely on the bill. Photograph by: Ed Kaiser, Ed Kaiser

The acting grand chief of the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations is demanding the Redford government withdraw an aboriginal consultation bill he claims is being rammed through the legislature without adequate consultation.

Herb Arcand, chief of Alexander First Nation, west of Edmonton, called on Aboriginal relations Minister Robin Campbell to defer the legislation until fall to give aboriginal groups an opportunity for consultation and input into Bill 22, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Bill.

Arcand said Bill 22 is unacceptable to the confederacy in its present form.

"I hope Minister Campbell is listening," he told reporters at the legislature Tuesday. "The chiefs of Treaty 6 have been disrespected. We've had no input into this bill whatever."

He said the bill a "direct affront" and "an assault on our Constitutionally-protected aboriginal and treaty rights."

Government MLAs voted down two motions Monday night that would have deferred the bill and sent it to an all-party legislature committee.

Despite unanimous dissent from the three opposition parties, the bill passed second reading and has now moved to committee of the whole.

"Clearly this process not only derogates from our constitutionally-protected aboriginal and treaty rights, but also undermines the very principles of Canada's democratic process," he said.

Bill 22 is aimed at creating an industry levy to fund consultation with First Nations communities regarding developments that might "adversely impact traditional uses of land," but opposition parties say the province's three major treaty organizations claim they were "blindsided" by it.

Aboriginal groups are concerned the bill gives the government the authority to "identify" aboriginal groups and to collect the funds. They also don't like the fact the bill decrees that the minister's decisions are binding and cannot be reviewed.

Campbell says he consulted widely on the bill.

"There's no doubt that not every chief is going to be happy, not every industry is going to be happy, not everybody in our government is going to be happy," he said, "but the fact of the matter is we're moving forward with a bill that is going to put in place the opportunity for every First Nation to have a place at the table."

Liberal MLA David Swann warned that passing legislation affecting aboriginal people without adequate consultation could fuel the fires of aboriginal protest movement's like Idle No More."I think there are some political games being played," said Swann. "The government has touted itself as leading the way in consultation but the reality on the ground is quite different."

Wildrose Leader Danielle Smith, who introduced 22 members of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 in the legislature Tuesday, said her party will continue its efforts to have the bill deferred to an all-party committee to enable consultation during the summer and input from aboriginal leaders.

"If the government thinks it has done enough consultation and they believe the chiefs are behind them they should tell us who they are because every chief we've spoken with and every nation we've spoken with have been uniform in their opposition to the bill."

She said the minister made a "misstep" in his rush to bring in legislation for consulting aboriginal people to conform with the creation of a new single regulator for energy development and he should slow down and do it right.

"It's very important for us to get these relationships right and the minister has made a major misstep by putting this forward without consultation."

NDP leader Brian Mason said First Nations people filled the gallery at the Legislative Assembly to listen to the debate that went late into the night.

"When we spoke against the bill, they applauded and they provided us with correspondence saying that not only were they not consulted, but they strongly oppose the bill," he said. "That it's an old-fashioned, paternalistic, colonial-style approach — not consultation."

Mason added: "The irony here is it's a bill about consultation with First Nations that was drafted without consultation with First Nations. You could do a musical about that, a comedy. I don't know. It's just a joke."

With files from Sarah O'Donnell

Aboriginal education vexes Canada (and Paul Martin)

Canada First Perspective
May 15, 2013

Jeffrey Simpson

Former prime minister Paul Martin could have put up his feet after leaving political life, but relaxation is not part of his DNA.

Mr. Martin didn't need money, so he embarked on projects that meant a lot to him and to the country, especially aboriginal education, a pressing long-term problem in Canada.

Through the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative, Mr. Martin is trying to raise awareness of, and do something about, the challenges of educating aboriginal young people. He contributed seed money to launch projects, notably but not exclusively in entrepreneurship and literacy. Foundations, provincial governments and individuals contribute more money to spread the pilot projects.

Anyone who crosses paths with Mr. Martin these days senses the passion and urgency with which he addresses the challenge. He, like many others, laments the state of funding for education on reserves.

He explains "underfunding" this way: Ottawa compares what it pays for each reserve student with provincial averages and denies that a problem exists. Mr. Martin insists that the comparison should be made with per capita funding for remote and rural schools, which always require more money than urban ones. Factor in geography, to say nothing of the specific additional challenges of educating young people on reserves, and Mr. Martin believes the gap is $2,000 to $3,000 per student.

Money is important, but it isn't the only challenge in improving education on reserves. Only half of aboriginal children live with two parents, compared with three-quarters of non-aboriginal children. Almost half of all children in Canadian foster homes are aboriginal.

Unemployment on reserves is endemic, as are all sorts of social problems: fetal alcohol syndrome, poor housing, weak literacy rates, a lack of role models and other impediments to learning. So many reserves are economic dead ends that children find little incentive to learn.

Better formal education may be a way to improve this altogether unsatisfactory situation. As Statistics Canada reported last week, 28 per cent of Canada's Indian, Métis and Inuit population is under 14 years of age, compared with 16.5 per cent for the non-aboriginal population. And the overall aboriginal population is growing fast: 20-per-cent growth nationwide between 2006 and 2011, compared with 5.2 per cent for the rest of the population.

For some provinces, better aboriginal education will be indispensable to future well-being.

Take Manitoba, which Mr. Martin visited last week in connection with his initiative. Manitoba can't reach a better economic standing without fuller and better participation of its aboriginal population, because it and Saskatchewan have the largest share of total population that is aboriginal, mostly Indian.

Manitoba's statistical office estimates that the province will need another 186,200 workers by 2020. The jobs most in demand – sales and service; business, finance and administration; management, health, social science, education and government services – all require high levels of education.

What happens too often is that aboriginal children arrive at school not ready to learn. They fall behind the curriculum on the reserve (or behind other students at off-reserve schools) and are subsequently not prepared for high school. Poor grades lead to dropout rates that are way higher than provincial averages and postsecondary admission rates that are much lower. The work force participation rate for aboriginals is roughly 20 points lower than for immigrants who have been in Canada for fewer than 10 years.

Winnipeg has improved markedly as an urban area in the past 15 years. But it remains plagued by gangs, crime and violence. As a result, the fastest-growing increase in provincial government personnel is in corrections. The federal Harper government's "tough on crime" policies will make everything worse by driving up aboriginal incarcerations in the province's already crowded prisons.

Mr. Martin is the first to acknowledge that his efforts, and those of other foundations and private interests, can't replace what he sees as the proper level of government funding for on-reserve education. The challenge of raising aboriginal education levels is evident across Canada – nowhere more so than in Manitoba.

How Quebec Cree avoided the fate of Attawapiskat: On the eastern shore of James Bay, a very different story

CBC News
May 14, 2013 9:33 PM ET
Terry Milewski



Flourishing Cree in Quebec

Freezing, mouldy homes. Sewage contamination. Sick kids. Unemployment. A blockade on the road to the

mine. A hunger strike by the chief.

That, it seems, is the news from the Cree of James Bay — at least, as it's defined by the desperate community of Attawapiskat, in northern Ontario.

Before that, there was the news from nearby Kashechewan. Flooding. Despair. Suicide.

And both James Bay towns endured fresh emergencies this spring as the annual meltwaters exposed, again, their rickety infrastructure.

But bad news makes headlines and good news usually does not. So we've heard all about the mess on the Ontario shore of James Bay — and next to nothing about the success on the eastern shore, in Quebec.



Schoolchildren in the northern Cree community of Wemindji, Que., enjoy decent schools, in contrast to their Ontario cousins in Attawapiskat, who have been in portables since their school closed more than a decade ago. (Terry Milewski/CBC)

Little noticed by the world outside, the Cree of northern Quebec are writing a startlingly different story than their cousins on the western shore of James Bay. Self-government. Revenue-sharing. Decent schools and new development. Mining companies being welcomed instead of blockaded. And no hunger strikes.

It's taken 40 years, but a long struggle is paying off. The neat streets of Wemindji or Oujé-Bougamou feel like they're on a different planet than Attawapiskat. If the stop signs weren't in Cree, you'd think the rows of warm, solid homes were in a suburb down south. Shiny new courthouses, band offices, recreation centres and police stations are being completed. There's no crisis to summon reporters from Toronto or Montreal.

So why is it so different on the Quebec side of James Bay?

'The Indian Act doesn't apply'

Matthew Coon Come, once a firebrand who stood in the way of Quebec Hydro's plans to dam the province's great rivers, is now the greying Grand Chief of the Cree of Eeyou Istchee — the Cree name for the 400,000 square kilometres of northern Quebec that make up the James Bay territory. Coon Come is clear on the reasons why his people are doing so well.

They stood in the way for a purpose, he says — not to stop development, but to share in it and to win the right to govern themselves.

"We are assuming the responsibilities of the federal government and the provincial government, that's what we are doing."

Bit by bit, Coon Come says, the Cree bargained away their land claims and their right to be treated as wards of the state under the Indian Act. In return, through a series of agreements beginning in 1975, the Cree won a healthy share of the huge resource revenues from the dams and the mines.



Matthew Coon Come, left, talks about his community's path to self-government over a lunch of moose and beaver meat. (CBC)

Today, power lines traverse the landscape of Eeyou Istchee and $70 million a year in revenues flow to the 18,000 Cree. They're using the money to finance their second goal: autonomy.

"For the Crees, the Indian Act doesn't apply," Coon Come proudly tells a visitor in his spacious office in Nemaska, Que.

"The decision-making does not fall on the Department of [Aboriginal Affairs], the minister," he says. "The only thing that the minister has the right to receive is our financial audit statements — and once a year.

"That's never been done before ... We've changed the governance regime so we can be able to be involved in the way development takes place."

'We decided to act. We decided to do something and change living conditions around us ... I think it's a lot better than being passive.'*—Abel Bosum, veteran Cree negotiator*

He's critical of both First Nations and southern politicians who cling to the past.

"I think the First Nations are also guilty of always saying, 'our treaties are sacred.' That's great. But the Cree survived because we adapted."

He also says that self-government has to be earned.

"It takes time to build your institutions. Because, in order to build your institutions, whether it be school boards or health boards, you need to be able to demonstrate that you're accountable, that you're responsible, that you're transparent."

Equally, he says, governments in Ottawa are reluctant to "think outside the box."

"Unfortunately in this country, the federal government does not want to tackle the real issue of the First Nations.... You need to allow the First Nations to participate, to be participants in the development of the territory, [whether] it be forestry, mining, or any other industry that may come."

The tale of the solar-powered trapper

For an outsider, what is striking about the far-flung Cree communities of northern Quebec is the complaints you do not hear. In drum-banging demonstrations on Parliament Hill and around the country, the Idle No More movement has damned the government for trampling on native rights and polluting the land. But these themes are rarely heard in northern Quebec, even though mines and power lines have frequently disrupted Cree communities.

Instead, there is general applause for the way the Cree leadership is balancing jobs and the environment. Even the traditional custodians of the land — the trappers — are slow to complain about the newcomers who have brought roads, mines and power lines.



Johnny T. Georgekish, known as simply Johnny T. in his days as a popular singer, remembers his hungry childhood and is confident his grandson's generation won't endure the same fate. (CBC)

"We get along with them," says Johnny T. Georgekish at his remote hunting camp, two hours inland from Wemindji.

"They have their families to support. They come and go. And normally, they don't leave a mess when they leave — just sometimes."

Georgekish is still known as "Johnny T." from his days as a popular singer. Now 74, he keeps an eye on his trap line and recalls his own hungry childhood, living off the land and catching birds with slingshots. He's glad his grandson won't have to endure that — because he's got a steady job in a new mine.

"They say that mine is going to be open for at least 20 some-odd years. So, if he continues, he's going to be OK."

Georgekish is no fan of the old ways. His hunting camp, as remote as it is, is powered by a bank of solar panels. He says there have been limited environmental changes as a result of the hydroelectric dams: for example, the sturgeon no longer reach the nearby lake. Even so, he thinks the Cree are on the right road.

"If we continue the way we are, I think we're going to get somewhere in the future."

Younger members of the sprawling Georgekish clan say the Cree have already got somewhere — and don't plan to turn back.

"We're not Indians — we're the Cree of Eeyou Ischee!" says an insistent Bradley Georgekish. He's a band councillor in Wemindji, on the windswept shore of James Bay.



A community cooking camp stands on the outskirts of Wemindji. (Terry Milewski/CBC)

"We're business owners, we're entrepreneurs, we're artists, we're musicians, we're fathers, we're mothers," he says.

"I mean, we have ourselves established."

The community bears him out. He and the other councillors meet in a soaring new band office, built by a Cree-owned construction company. New vehicles cruise well-paved streets. A wood-panelled courthouse is about to open and, at a gravel airstrip near town, a Cree-owned airline, Air Creebec, offers daily flights to the south.

Georgekish sends a message to a CBC crew about to depart: don't fear aboriginal demands, because dealing with us can be good for both sides.

"I would like for people to read a little bit, and get to know First Nations history, just a little bit. And I think a lot of this tension would be peeled back," he says. "I mean, I've been in school in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec — and I've learned all about the prime ministers. It would be nice, and it's a very simple request, if they could learn just a little bit about native history. And they would understand why there's frustration on some levels, even anger. But I think if they could do a little reading, and a little bit of studying, that tension would go down and we could actually be partners."

Partners in development

Still, does it look that way when you're on the other side of the partnership? What if you're a mining executive, and the Cree insist on being part of your environmental plan?

That's exactly the situation facing Patrick Godin, chief operating officer of Stornoway Diamond Corporation, which is planning a diamond mine northeast of Chibougamau,

a bustling town where Cree and non-Cree mingle. Godin says the Cree brought expertise and credibility that made his project viable.



A power line corridor cuts through land in northern Quebec. Hydro development was once a flashpoint for conflict with Cree communities in the area, but now the power lines represent economic independence and self-government. (Terry Milewski/CBC)

"The Crees have a lot of things to provide to us. First, the knowledge of the territory. Actually, they are building the road for us and they are doing really well. They know the environment more than us. It's amazing — they don't need GPS, they know all the rivers, all the creeks and they know how to address the challenge we have to face to fulfil our obligations in terms of the environmental rules."

Beyond that, says Godin, the Cree need jobs.

"Fifty per cent of the Cree are less than 25 years old and they want to have jobs — and they want to have high-quality jobs. And they want to learn and they want to develop their skills."

In Jean Rainville's case, consulting the Cree meant spending many long days with the local trappers. Rainville is president of BlackRock Metals, which is planning a new iron and titanium mine, backed by Chinese investors.

"A project like ours will hire, during construction, 450 people — and, once construction is completed, 260 employees on a full-time basis. So there's plenty of jobs for all of the communities in the area, both natives and non-natives."

Making sure the trappers were content was a big part of getting the green light. Rainville says the Cree have learned a lot since the 1975 James Bay agreement set them on the pro-development path.

"The Cree now, after all of these years of experience since they signed the James Bay Treaty, are probably a bit more advanced than other natives in this country, but it's a lesson that other natives should follow. And it's also a lesson for us non-natives that the first thing to do is go sit down with these people, develop a relationship and go from there."

Today, that relationship is working far better than it did back in the days when Quebec Hydro and the mining companies simply pushed the Cree off their land. In

Oujé-Bougoumou, a whole community was uprooted, no less than seven times, by miners. People camped in teepees and tar-paper shacks by the side of the road.



Humanitarian aid packages of food and water arrive in the remote northern Ont. community of Attawapiskat on Dec. 17, 2011. (Frank Gunn/CP)

"We were like Attawapiskat — you know, living in Third World conditions," says Abel Bosum, a veteran negotiator for the Cree who worked for 20 years to turn Oujé-Bougoumou into a showpiece community with a gleaming, $65-million cultural centre.

"But we decided to act. We decided to do something and change living conditions around us ... I think it's a lot better than being passive. You know, here we're being proactive and, you know, trying to take a piece of the action.

"We can't just sit around and wait for the governments to do things for us, or for ore companies," says Bosum. "We have to learn to decide what we want and work with the forces around us."

Today, the 18,000 Cree of northern Quebec definitely have a piece of the action. Their numbers are growing fast and 400 of them are in institutions of higher learning down south.

Games about more than sports

St. Albert Leader
May 15, 2013
Glenn Cook

Empowerment and encouraging active lifestyles will be the real victories for First Nations youth taking part in the Alberta Indigenous Games when they are held in St. Albert later this summer.

Organizers held a press conference Tuesday at St. Albert Place to promote the games, which will be held from Aug. 4 to 9.

"Youth need to be empowered in a way that affects their lives. … [These games are] a way to grow, feel empowered and be successful," said Ashley

Callingbull, a motivational speaker who will serve as master of ceremonies for some of the events.

"This is one of many things that links youth to our history, to the Aboriginal discovery of our community," added Mayor Nolan Crouse, whose wife Gwen is the honorary chair of the games.
The games are expected to draw 1,400 participants between the ages of 12 and 18 from across the province to compete in 10 sports: softball, ball hockey, archery, basketball, volleyball, track and field, soccer, golf, canoeing and lacrosse.

"We'll definitely provide a very good games for people to come and watch," said Allan Ross, CEO of the games.

Cheryl Ogima is a past competitor at the games and a lifelong athlete, and she said sports have been very important in her life.

"My girls, who are now 11, have been showing an interest in different sports … I'm hoping that with my mentorship and my husband, who likes to play baseball, that they continue that in their lives," she said.

Her daughters, Paige and Paris, want to compete in the games.

Paige wants to compete because she's a "natural runner," and Paris said she "likes meeting new people."

Sage Morin is one of the games' recruitment leaders, traveling to schools across Alberta to spread the word about the games.

"We want to get our foot in the door so [kids play] sports for the rest of their lives," he said. "They can play a huge role."

Aside from the competition, though, organizers are also hoping to co-ordinate a fun run during the games to commemorate Alex Decoteau, who competed for Canada at the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden, and became the first Aboriginal police officer in Edmonton.

"[We want to show that] you can achieve more than you are, and sports are one way to get there," said Const. Lisa Wolfe of the Edmonton Police Service.
More information on the games can be found online at www.aig2013.ca.

Talk 4 Healing Ready to Help

Net Newsledger
May 10, 2013
James Murray



Two of the Talk4Healing Councillors share what the service can offer to women

THUNDER BAY – Talk 4 Healing is a service offered by the Ontario Native Women's Association. The service is funded and supported by the Ontario Government and Beendigen Inc. The service is a twenty-four hour a day, seven day a week call-in-help line that offers help primarily to Indigneous women.

The service is offered in English, Cree, and Ogicree as well as Ojibway.

Talk 4 Healing

Often women looking for help in their communities, across the province, are left looking for resources. Sharing their story or the problems they are facing, in some cases with family or friends might be the best way but might have women feeling they can not, or should not share what is happening.

Talk 4 Healing offers support for women in a culturally supportive way. The information is personal. The councillors are non-judgemental.

The service is offered for women on or off reserve, for urban or rural women, and is confidential.

The service is also online. The website is a safe place to find out extra information. There is also a quick way for the page to be closed quickly on the top of the page

making it safe for a person in a potentially vulnerable situation to be safer. The site also offers ways for a person to "cover their tracks" and remove traces of having been to the site from their computer and potentially preying eyes.

Talk4Healing is a confidential service, and offers the women, and in some cases men too, the ability to find out how to handle a situation.

1-855-554-HEAL

For more information you can visit www.talk4healing.com

Aboriginal Peoples' Commission begins exciting policy development process

Liberal Party of Canada
May 16, 2013



OTTAWA - In preparation for the 2015 election, the Aboriginal Peoples' Commission is reaching out to Indigenous people of Canada for a unique online policy development process.

We are at a crucial stage in the journey to reconciliation," says Glenn Wheeler, Vice-President (Policy) for the Aboriginal Peoples' Commission. "There is goodwill among Canadians and among Aboriginal peoples and a willingness to chart a new course. What we need now is political leadership."

The process – to be led by the APC – will feature an online component which will be supplemented by policy town halls at locations across Canada.

This is one of several opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples to have an open discussion and ensure that their voices are heard within the Liberal Party of Canada" said Maryanne Kampouris, the National Policy Chair for the Liberal Party of Canada. "I look forward to the results of this and future such initiatives and I commend the APC for its inclusive approach and foresight."

In the first phase, members and supporters will be able to offer their feedback online regarding a wide variety of critical policy areas, and make suggestions for revision.

The APC will shortly be adding draft policy for discussion purposes only in two key areas – urban Aboriginal policy and self-government. The policy will be unveiled at an Urban Aboriginal Policy Summit in Toronto on June 18. The event, taking place at the Native Canadian Centre at 16 Spadina Road in Toronto from 2 to 4 pm, will be facilitated by the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, M.D., M.P., the party's critic for Aboriginal Affairs and by members of the APC.

For more information on how to take part in the APC policy development process, visit: http://apc-cpa.liberal.ca/policy.

For More information on the Aboriginal Peoples' Commission, contact:

Kevin Seesequasis
Vice-President (Communications)
Contact Us

Complaints watchdog to probe Mounties

Metro News
May 16, 2013

OTTAWA – A formal investigation has been launched into allegations of abuse of aboriginal women by Mounties in northern British Columbia.

Ian McPhail, the interim chairman of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, took the rare step this week of initiating the complaint himself, rather than waiting for one from the public.

The probe comes after the New York-based group Human Rights Watch issued a report in February outlining allegations of rape and other abuses of aboriginal women at the hands of police.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper asked the commission to look into the allegations shortly after the report was released, but also urged potential victims to come forward on their own.

That prompted an outcry from researchers involved in compiling the report, who accused Harper of missing the point: aboriginal women and girls are often too traumatized to co-operate with police.

The RCMP has also complained that its investigative hands are tied without hearing from alleged victims or knowing who they are.

Given the concerns raised in the report, "I am satisfied there are reasonable grounds for me to initiate this complaint," McPhail said in a statement released Wednesday.

Human Rights Watch researchers visited 10 communities in northern B.C. last summer, where they documented accounts from aboriginal women of how they were allegedly mistreated by police.

The communities are connected to B.C.'s Highway 16, the so-called "Highway of Tears," a notorious stretch of road where a number of women have disappeared.

The commission will examine how Mounties in those communities use force, and how they police public intoxication, conduct searches and handle reports of missing persons and domestic violence.

And the investigation could be broadened, depending on what evidence is found, and whether other complainants come forward, said the commission.

"The commission is cognizant that the potential exists that specific complaints from individuals will arise during the course of the public interest investigation," it said.

"If such complaints arise, they will be handled by the commission as separate public complaints, and/or notified to the appropriate criminal process."

Human Rights Watch, the Assembly of First Nations and federal opposition parties have for months called for a national commission of inquiry into the allegations.

The Conservative government responded by offering up a special parliamentary committee to study missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada.

Harper, who took part Thursday in a question-and-answer session in New York hosted by the Council for Foreign Relations, was asked whether he would support an inquiry.

"I tend to remain skeptical of commissions of inquiry generally," Harper said. "My experience has been they almost always run way over time, way over budget and often the recommendations prove to be of limited utility."

Harper said the issue has been studied extensively, and that "it is time to pass to action." The government, he said, has invested resources to establish prevention programs and to buttress the investigative powers of police.